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Senator Dianne Feinstein

of California

Statement of Senator Feinstein on Columbine-Style Plot in Sacramento County

*- Plot Underscores Need to Reauthorize Assault Weapons Ban,
which will expire in Seven Months this Friday -
February 11, 2004*

“Law enforcement authorities announced Tuesday that a plot to launch a Columbine-style attack on a Sacramento County high school was thwarted. According to news reports, two 15-year old students were arrested on suspicion that they were planning to rob a local sporting goods store, steal weapons, and target African American classmates in the schools’ cafeteria.

While we are all relieved that this attack was prevented, it underscores the urgent need to reauthorize the assault weapons ban and close a loophole that allows large magazines, drums, and strips of ammunition to be imported into this country.

Assault weapons are the weapons of choice for those seeking to do the maximum damage possible in the shortest amount of time – like these suspects. That’s what makes them so dangerous, especially when they have large ammunition magazines or drums attached. Perpetrators are able to use the light triggers to spray fire and kill a large number of people in a short amount of time.

Yet, the Assault Weapons Ban – which has reduced the percentage of assault weapons used in crimes – will expire in seven months unless Congress acts. The clock is ticking.

Despite the fact that President Bush has indicated that he supports renewing the assault weapons ban, he has done nothing to ensure its passage. Additionally, his allies in Congress – most notably Tom Delay – have said that they plan on killing the reauthorization and never letting it see the light of day.

It is time for all those who support the ban to stand up and be counted. Parents, teachers, ministers, physicians, and community leaders all support the ban. Congress must now do its part.”

The Ban, which expires on September 13, 2004, prohibits the manufacture and importation of 19 specific military style assault weapons, including the civilian versions of the Uzi and Mac-10 and also banned the manufacture of copycat weapons. In addition, the

legislation would close a loophole in the 1994 law, which prohibits the domestic manufacture of high-capacity ammunition magazines, but allows foreign companies to continue sending them to this country by the millions.

Yet, if Congress does not act, the ban -- which enjoys broad support and has been proven to be effective -- will expire.

FEINSTEIN-SCHUMER-CHAFEE-JEFFORDS-DEWINE ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN RE-AUTHORIZATION – FAQ

Is The Assault Weapons Ban Is Going to Expire?

Yes. The assault weapons ban will sunset on *September 13, 2004*.

What Will the Feinstein-Schumer Bill Do?

1. **Strike the sunset date** from the 1994 law, re-authorizing the ban indefinitely; and
2. **Ban the importation of large capacity ammunition feeding devices.** This provision passed the Senate 59-39, and passed the House by unanimous consent, as an amendment to the 1999 juvenile justice bill. The overall juvenile justice bill got bottled up in conference, however, and thus the import ban never became law.

What Has the Administration Said?

Many news articles, campaign web sites, and even Ari Fleischer and then Scott McClellan, Bush's spokesmen, have indicated that Bush supports both re-authorizing the assault weapons ban AND banning the importation of large capacity ammunition clips.

- Responding to a question at his confirmation hearing, John Ashcroft said "it is my understanding that *the President-elect of the United States has indicated his support for extending the assault weapon ban*, and I will be pleased to support that as a policy of this President and as a policy of the Justice Department."
- At his February 6, 2001 White House press briefing, Ari Fleischer said "*...the President would also ban importation of high capacity ammunition clips.*"
- And more recently, in April, 2003, White House spokesman Scott McClellan said of the assault weapons ban, "*The president supports the current law, and he supports reauthorization of the current law.*"

Is There Any Evidence That the Ban is Working?

YES. Recent statistics released by the Department of Justice indicate that the use of banned guns in crime plummeted more than 65% between 1995 (the year after the ban took effect), and 2002 (the last year for which statistics are available).

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